

Message Text

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43

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ADP-00 SSO-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15 DPW-01

IO-13 AID-20 RSR-01 INRE-00 /143 W

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O R 231201Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5522

INFO WHITE HOUSE

CIA

DIA

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

RUHHRGA/CINCUSARPAC

CINCPACAF

CINCPACFLT

DEPCHJUSMAGTHAI

CDR USSAG NKP

CDR 13 AF ADVON UDORN

USDEL JEC PARIS

SECDEF

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 5891

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PGOV, PINS, PINT, PFOR, LA, US, VN, XC

SUBJECT: THE LAO CEASEFIRE -- 26TH WEEK

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REF: VIENTIANE 5710

I. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

A. COMBAT ACTIVITY IN LAOS CONTINUED TO DECREASE DURING 26TH WEEK OF CEASEFIRE. ONLY TWO MAJOR INCIDENTS, OUT OF THIRTEEN TOTAL, WERE RECORDED AND BOTH WERE ENEMY-INITIATED. LIKEWISE, ALL BUT TWO INCIDENTS OCCURRED IN MR'S THREE AND FOUR. RLAF FLEW ONLY ONE COMBAT SORTIE.

B. ROUTE THIRTEEN BETWEEN VIENTIANE AND SAVANNAKHET IS NOW REPORTED OPEN WITH NO LPF HINDERANCE TO CIVILIAN TRAFFIC, OTHER THAN OCCASIONAL BOARDING OF BUSES TO CHECK DOCUMENTS. IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE AUGUST 20 ABORTIVE COUP, ONE HUNDRED SPECIAL TROOPS FROM THE SECOND STRIKE DIVISION STATIONED AT SENO WERE FLOWN TO VIENTIANE FOR REPORTED USE AS "PALACE GUARDS" TO PROVIDE PROTECTION FOR SENIOR RLG OFFICIALS.

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

A. THE TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK OF THE LAO CEASEFIRE PROVED TO BE A WEEK OF TESTING TM FIRE. DURING THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF AUGUST 20 GENERAL THAO MA, WHO WAS EXILED TO THAILAND AFTER LAUNCHING UNSUCCESSFUL UPRISING IN 1966, TRIED TO OVERTHROW PRIMIN SOUVANNA PHOUMA, THE REBELS CAPTURED PORTIONS OF WATTAY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND THE RADIO STATION. THEY PROCEEDED TO FLY CAPTURED T-28 IN STRIKES AGAINST RLG GENERAL KOUPRASITH'S MR-V HEADQUARTERS AT CHINAIMO. FOUR PEOPLE WERE KILLED AND ONE WOUNDED. THAO MA WAS SHOT DEAD AFTER HIS T-28 CRASHED AT WATTAY, WHILE THE NUMBER TWO INSURGENT, COLONEL BOUNLEUTH, FLED BY HELICOPTER FROM VIENTIANE TO THAKHEK AND HAS YET TO BE LOCATED. HE IS BEING HUNTED IN BOTH LAOS AND THAILAND. ONE OTHER CO-CONSPIRATOR, COLONEL PANI, WAS ALSO SHOT DEAD; AND 14 OTHER REBELS ARE NOW IN CUSTODY OF THE FAR.

B. COMMUNIST MEDIA IN LAOS AND HANOI HAVE CHARGED THAT THE COUP WAS A REACTIONARY EFFORT MOUNTED BY LAO RIGHTIST ELEMENTS SUPPORTED DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY BY THE THAI WITH AMERICAN CONNIVANCE. CHARGE AT AN EARLY HOUR ON AUGUST 20 MADE IT EMINENTLY CLEAR TO ALL CONCERNED IN VIENTIANE -- INCLUDING INSURGENT LEADERS, RLGA GENERALS, HIGH-RANKING RLG OFFICIALS, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL DIPLOMATIC CORPS -- THAT U.S. STANDS ONE HUNDRED PERCENT BEHIND SOUVANNA PHOUMA. LATER SAME DAY, THE THAI GOVERNMENT ALSO EXPRESSED ITS SUPPORT FOR SOUVANNA, AS DID THE CHIEFS OF MISSIONS RESIDENT IN VIENTIANE, THESE STATEMENTS WERE PARTICULARLY GRATIFYING TO SOUVANNA.

C. THE SUCCESSFUL QUELLING OF THE COUP ATTEMPT APPEARS TO HAVE STRENGTHENED SOUVANNA'S HAND IN DEALING WITH ELEMENTS ON RLG

SIDE WHO HAVE BASIC DISAGREEMENTS WITH PRIMIN OVER HIS NEGOTIATING STRATEGY VIS-A-VIS THE LPF. THE LATTER NOW CAN CLEARLY SEE THAT SOUVANNA'S POLICIES HAVE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT, PARTICULARLY FROM UNITED STATES. IN SPITE OF THIS FACT, SOUVANNA'S CABINET MEETING ON AUGUST 22 AS REPORTEDLY HEATED AS NGON SANANIKONE, SPEAKING, HE SAID, FOR THE MILITARY, OPPOSED THE PROTOCOL. THE PRIMIN IS SEEKING TO OBTAIN A CABINET/MILITARY CONSENSUS ON THIS QUESTION TODAY.

D. WHILE SOUVANNA'S PHYSICAL STRENGTH INITIALLY APPEARED SOMEWHAT SAPPED BY THE COUP SUPPRESSION EFFORT, HE SEEMS TO HAVE RESUMED MOVING TOWARD AN AGREEMENT ON THE PROTOCOL. LPF NEGOTIATOR PHOUN SIPRASEUTH ARRIVED THIS AFTERNOON ON THE AEROFLOT FLIGHT FROM HANOI, AFTER A FIVE-DAY ABSENCE FOR CONSULTATIONS IN SAM NEUA. IF THE LPF IS WILLING TO MAKE "FINAL" CONCESSION TO THE RLG, AND THE PRIMIN OBTAINS ACQUIESCENCE OF RIGHTISTS, WE MAY BE MOVING TOWARD DENOUEMENT OF THESE PROLONGED NEGOTIATIONS.
DEAN

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